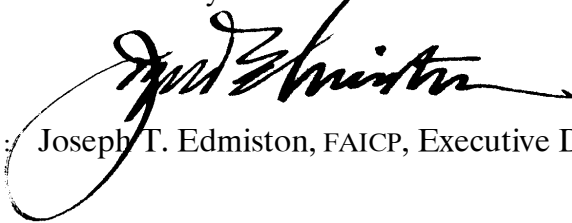


# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: March 27, 2006

From :   
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 16: Consideration of resolution authorizing the addition of properties to the Stokes Canyon-King Gillette Connector, Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor - North, and the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve-Northeast Connector workprogram projects.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) adopt the attached resolution authorizing the addition of properties to the Stokes Canyon-King Gillette Connector, Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor - North, and the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve-Northeast Connector workprogram projects.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33208(a) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The current Conservancy Acquisition Workprogram was adopted in 2000. During the last six years projects have been added periodically, and boundaries have been modified. Generally, Workprogram boundaries are expanded or projects are added to take advantage of opportunity purchases, to accommodate area-specific funding, to compensate for prior omissions, and to complement existing protected open space lands. The proposed action would involve the addition of properties to three existing Acquisition Workprogram project boundaries, and would add a new Workprogram project.

A project boundary map, a brief project description, and the rationale for adding the properties follows. Existing Workprogram boundaries are also shown. In order for the Conservancy to authorize a grant to another entity to acquire a property, it must be on the Acquisition Workprogram. Furthermore, in Los Angeles County, in order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Conservancy to use Proposition A Excess Funds on a project, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually by the Conservancy to the Governor as part of its annual report.

## Stokes Canyon-King Gillette Connector

On January 23, 2006, the Conservancy authorized the addition of the Stokes-Canyon King Gillette Connector and other properties to the Conservancy's Acquisition Workprogram. At that meeting, the Conservancy also authorized adding the Stokes-Canyon King Gillette Connector and other properties to the Conservancy's Workprogram for the Safe Neighborhood

Parks Act of 1996 (Proposition A). The purpose of this action taken on January 23, 2006 was to provide connectivity between lower Stokes Canyon and the new King Gillette Ranch (Soka University) acquisition.

Public testimony at the January 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting approved of the addition to the Workprogram but emphasized the need to encompass more area in the project boundary. Staff had originally shied away from making a more direct connection between Las Virgenes View Park and King Gillette Ranch because the majority of the properties have homes or would be expensive acquisitions. However, the north side of Mulholland from the west end of King Gillette Ranch provides critical viewshed to a flagship park and highway. In addition, this area of rolling hills makes a direct habitat linkage that could easily be restored even with the presence of some homes. The potential cost of this project area should thus not deter its addition to the Workprogram.

Tonight's action of adding properties totaling 64 acres to this existing Stokes-Canyon King Gillette Connector Workprogram project would emphasize the need to protect land connecting Stokes Canyon core habitat. Essentially now the Workprogram would include every undeveloped area between lower Stokes Canyon and King Gillette Ranch.

#### **Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor - North**

At the February 27, 2006 Conservancy meeting, some members the public requested that certain properties in and near Liberty Canyon be added to the Conservancy Workprogram. These public members may not have been aware that the majority of these properties are within two existing Workprogram projects, the Liberty Canyon - Northeast Wildlife Corridor and Liberty Canyon - Northwest Wildlife Corridor. These existing nominations are located adjacent to the MRCA-owned Liberty Canyon property in the Simi Hills. The proposed action would make small additions, totaling 6.8 acres, to round out these Workprogram projects.

#### **Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve-Northeast Connector**

Following the acquisition of Ahmanson Ranch, it soon became clear how important two abutting properties are in Los Angeles County. These properties provide good public access and excellent park buffer. The Westhills Homeowners Association also has long requested that the Conservancy extend the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve (Preserve) to include these. The two properties are located east of the Preserve, south of El Escorpion Park, and north of Knapp Ranch Park. The public could then access the Preserve from both Randiwood Lane and legally from City-owned El Escorpion Park at the end of Vanowen Avenue. Tonight's action would create a new Workprogram project, totaling 64 acres, entitled Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve-Northeast Connector.